DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 029 683 PS 001 617

By-Hull, William P.; Armington, David
Leicestershire Revisited.
Note-17p.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.95
Descriptors-Class Organization, *Educational Innovation, Educational Methods, Educational Objectives, *Educational Philosophy, *Experimental Programs, *Foreign Countries, Grouping (Instructional Purposes), Individual Instruction, Primary Grades, *Program Evaluation, Progressive Education, School Visitation
Identifiers-Infant Schools, Junior Schools, *Leicestershire County England

It is believed that the best of the new progressive infant and junior schools in Leicestershire County, England, are superior to those in the United States. Primarily found in the infant schools, this new concept in education emphasizes an environment in which a child is encouraged to learn but is given the freedom to do so in his own style at his own pace. The children are regarded as individuals capable of taking an active part in their own learning instead of disruptive creatures who need to be managed and guided through series of detailed tasks. The pupils in these English schools, although allowed great freedom of movement, display a remarkable self-restraint, integrity, and learning level. Several of the Leicestershire infant schools have done away with classes organized on the basis of age and have replaced them with vertical grouping. Leicestershire has also done away with the eleven-plus examination (used in England to qualify high scorers for high status grammar schools) because of its harsh effect. Many classes no longer need to make a distinction between one subject and another or between work and play. (WD)

ED029683

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Leicestershire Revisited

William P. Hull
and
David Armington
216 5790600

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I

A number of times during my visit to Leicestershire County in England this spring I found myself wishing that I could share certain scenes with others. A brief glimpse of some rather ordinary kinds of activities might do more to convince people of the significance of what has been happening in the County than any description or commentary. In this report I will both describe and comment, while continuing to wish that it were possible for readers to see for themselves some of the things that I will talk about.

Visiting schools in the County, one soon becomes accustomed to the patterns of organization which allow children much greater freedom and responsibility than is traditionally granted them elsewhere. One quickly comes to assume that primary education everywhere would have evolved along similar lines were it not crippled by false values and assumptions. What seems to have been achieved in some of the schools in Leicestershire is the logical extension and development of ideas which were being tried in this country by a few schools during the era of progressive education.

Some of us who have visited there believe that the best of the Leicestershire County schools represent a stage of educational development well in advance of what has been reached in this country. We are left, however, with a number of puzzling questions:

Why is it, for example, that these things could be achieved in at least one county in England but not in public schools in the United States? Why is it that many or most other English school systems have not been developing in the same direction? (There are indications that healthy changes may be occurring elsewhere in England, though perhaps not on so wide a scale as in Leicestershire. I have no first-hand knowledge of developments elsewhere.) What problems would one encounter in attempting to achieve some of the same reforms in American schools? What would be the chances of success in such an undertaking? It may well be that a major problem in the United States is that schools which once had progressive tendencies have moved slowly away from some of their original healthy practices without reclining the kinds of pressures which have caused the drift. What have these pressures been? Why has their effect so often been insidious and virtually ignored?

It is not easy to analyze a complexity compounded of differences in culture, values, and traditions. What appears on the surface to be the result of a natural process of evolution may involve factors which have yet to be isolated or described in ways which make apparent their signifcance. To create a Leicestershire-type learning environment in this country might prove considerably more difficult than some people seem to think when they come away from the County. While I am encouraged by such optimism on the part of so many, I fear that the task may require a good deal more insight and practical know-how than the too-often backward profession of education has shown for some years.

II

One of the startling experiences which Dave Armington and I had shortly after our arrival in Leicestershire was to watch children coming to morning assembly in an Infant School. More than four-hundred five, six, and seven-year-olds walked into the main hall from their classrooms, alone or in small groups, found places for themselves on the floor, and sat talking with each other during the ten minutes before the start of the short religious service. The children did not come into the hall in lines accompanied by teachers; they did not sit according to classes or any other prearranged plan. The teachers arrived after most of the children and sat on chairs around the outside of the group. Occasionally, during the waiting period, children would move from one place to another. The noise level was low. There did not seem to be a single word from any of the teachers for the purpose of restraining or controlling the children: there was no need for such measures. The scene reminded me of an adult audience waiting for the beginning of a concert. When it was time for the assembly to begin the children, well aware that something was about to happen, stopped talking, though we could not detect the signal to which they were responding--perhaps it was merely that everyone had now arrived. I had never before seen a community of young children behaving with such freedom and self-restraing. They demonstrated an awareness about the group and a sensitivity to it, together with an ability to control their own behavior. I have never come across this combination of characteristics in a comparable group of American children.

We saw many instances of these qualities in this and in other Infant Schools in the County. Some of the new schools have unusual architectural designs, classrooms being grouped around a large hall which is in continuous formal and informal use by children throughout the day. We saw halls, and nearby corridors and foyers, being used for block building, reading, writing, play shopkeeping, science explorations, baking, gymnastics and music. Classes in these schools, as in Infant and Junior Schools throughout England and Wales, average forty children and more. As one result of the large size of classes, teachers are not generally available to supervise activities outside of the classrooms, although in larger schools the Head, or the Deputy Head, may spend part of her time working with individual children or small groups in the hall or library. Music and gymnastics are sometimes conducted as formal classes, but throughout much of the day children may be freely using musical instruments and gym equipment on their own.

In some schools children mingle freely with each other outside the classroom, without respect to age. The assumption that children must spend most of the day in a self-contained classroom with other children their age has been fading in the best of these Infant Schools, with the result that children have a sense of belonging to a much larger community than that of the individual class. In a few Infant Schools which we visited children are not assigned to age-groups at all. Rather than forming separate groups of fives, sixes, and sevens, these schools have vertical or "family" groups encompassing the entire Infant age range from five to seven and a half. There is a vibrant quality, reflecting deep involvement in what is going on and contributing to

a largeness of spirit in the Infant Schools which we visited.

Many Infants stay for lunch. At some Infant Schools the older children, seven-year-olds, help with the lunch routines, setting up and putting away chairs, laying out silverware. On occasion there will be too few teachers for all the tables, and the older children may help to serve the younger ones. The kitchen staff will also help around the hall. It is interesting to note that in these schools, and others at both the Infant and Junior levels, the kitchen staff is not isolated. Often the women will be sought out by children for help with spelling words and other academic problems. Practices such as this seem to have evolved naturally out of an atmosphere in which adults and children alike are accepted in their own right and valued as members of a meaningful community.

Our visits to the Infant Schools came as quite a shock to Dave and me because of the sharp contrast between what we saw there and the daily life in the schools with which we are familiar. We are accustomed to classes of twenty children with one teacher and, usually, an assistant teacher or teacher-in-training. A school assembly which takes place once a week requires all hands to march the children in line and to keep them from talking. Children sit by classes within reach of their teachers who are generally busy controlling disruptive behavior. Five-year-olds are introduced gradually to the heady experience of sharing a meal with their classmates, after four months of the school year have passed, by staying for lunch once a week under conditions which permit a ratio of one teacher to three children at the table. Seven-year-olds are allowed to stay for lunch three days a week and require the same teacher-pupil ratio. The responsibility of helping with lunchroom routines is a privilege reserved for fourteen-year-olds.

These are gross comparisons, easy to make because the contrast is so sharp. The contrast is emphasized further when it is kept in mind that the Infants we saw in Leicestershire were in schools serving all the children in the neighborhood, schools located next to council housing estates, the residents of the houses having been recently moved out from the slums of the inner city. The children we are most familiar with in the United States come from middle- and upper-middle-class families. The comparisons are shocking indeed for Americans, and help point out the sickness that has been growing in our ambitious, prestige-oriented schools.

It is more difficult to compare the learning which takes place in the two kinds of school situations because the styles are so different. Here again, however, it is hard to avoid feeling that many American Schools fare badly by comparison. We found in the best of the Leicestershire schools, both Infant and Junior, an involvement in their work on the part of the children, an integrity in their approach to what they were doing, which is not apparent in any American schools with which we are familiar. In the few spheres where direct comparisons are justifiable, such as work in Multi-base arithmetic and in free writing, many of the Leicestershire schools were clearly ahead in terms of the calibre of the work being done. Our feeling, shared by a number of people who have visited the County, is that the climate in the best schools is much more favorable for learning than in schools

here.

Why is it that the Primary schools in Leicestershire have moved forward while so many American schools, including most of those which once pioneered in progressive education, have been going in quite a different direction? Part of the answer seems to lie in the widespread revolution in the teaching of Infants, a revolution which is now old enough to have established traditions in many parts of England. The Infant Schools have shared, as have many schools in the United States, in the enlightenment which has come from studies of child development. They have been highly successful in establishing more humane and effective forms of education. The organization of the schools and the age-span encompassed under the term "Infant" are probably important factors. Children are admitted three times a year, near their fifth birthday, but move on into Junior Schools only once a year, in September, near the age of seven and a half. All children, thus, have at least two years of Infant education and many have three years. They will be exposed over a considerable period of time to a unified pattern of teaching--in some instances they may have the same teacher for all, or most of their Infant school lives. In the United States, of course, children will normally have but one year of kindergarten before first grade intervenes, usually with quite a different set of values and expectations.

The differences between the Infant Schools and our kindergartens extend beyond matters of organization and age-spread. In the best of them children learn to read, write and work with numbers when they are ready. They are not held back and protected from such activities as they so often are in our kindergartens, nor are they coerced, face forward in formal classes, as they are in our first grades. Such flexibility is successful beyond question, whether one judges by the spirit and involvement of the children or by their ability and readiness in dealing with written English or systematic mathematics. In the best Infant classes most children learn to read because reading and writing are part of the atmosphere in the room. If they do not learn readily, however, they are not fussed over or worried about. The result is that Leicestershire Junior schools have few reading problems. We felt, nevertheless, that the technology of some of the work with language could be improved. There was, for example, little opportunity for the children to develop skills in phonetic analysis. But whatever the shortcomings, they are clearly offset by a philosophy and setting which encourages children to learn and gives them the freedom to do so in their own style, at their own pace.

The Infant Schools have a valuable heritage which has been growing for a number of years, a heritage which includes a wide range of interesting activities and materials as well as a spirit which gives vitality to what goes on. Such conditions do not come about automatically, but they do seem to be the natural outcome of regarding children as individuals capable of taking an active part in their own learning, instead of as disruptive creatures who need to be managed and guided through series of detailed tasks. We know of a few outstanding nursery and kindergarten classes in this country which are successful

largely because of sensitive and skillful teachers, but these teachers must work in opposition to the philosophy which prevails in the grades above them. It was quite significant, we felt, that in Leicestershire the pattern which has proved so successful with Infants has been extended beyond the classrooms of those few, rare teachers who would probably manage to teach well in any framework. It appears that when the educational climate is favorable and a good model is available teachers who are not themselves especially gifted may be able to run a good program.

The obvious excellence of the best Infant Schools we saw could be very discouraging for Americans. The achievement of these schools is so far ahead of what has been happening here that it might seem impossibly difficult to achieve comparable results in this country in the near future. I was really quite reassured to find that not all the schools in Leicestershire have made the progress which the best have made, that there are at least some County schools where education is still a grim, highly disciplined, tightly controlled undertaking. To me this meant that it may be possible for American schools to move toward more enlightened forms of education, that there are not special, mysterious forces at work which make such things possible in Leichestershire, but not elsewhere. Variation within the County seems considerable: some of their schools are apparently as poor as any of ours, so there may be hope here! People in the County are quite realistic about what remains to be done, and have no illusions that it will be done overnight. Vivian Gibbon, until recently Adviser to Infant Schools, estimated that it might take six or eight years to double the number of schools which are doing what is currently considered the best job possible. When one recalls that there are about two hundred and fifty primary (Infant and Junior) schools in the County, with a student population of about 40,000, one can appreciate the magnitude of the undertaking.

Many people have been surprised at the story we have told about what is happening in Leicestershire, for such progress is apparently not typical of England in general. I can only speculate about the reasons why changes are taking place in Leicestershire but not, at least be the name wide scale, elsewhere. (I should point out that my knowledge of what is happening in the west of England is limited.) I suspect that we are seeing the results of the influence of a small group of people, the County Director of Education, the Advisors for Junior and Infant Schools particularly, but also a number of heads of schools and individual teachers, a group which has worked together informally as well as formally in an atmosphere relatively unaffected by parental concerns and pressures as we know them in our middle-class schools. The lack of involvement of parents in schools seems to be true in England generally, although this pattern is changing slowly. What happens as a result is that changes can be made which do not necessarily accord with overt public sentiment. Obviously changes can be good or bad, and the lack of contact between parents and school could result in the implementation of poor educational policies. In Leicestershire, however, unusually enlightened and able

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administrators and advisors were ready and able to encourage the best of what was being accomplished and to introduce far-reaching innovations. The influence of these people appears to have been a major factor leading toward educational reform in County schools.

III

Leicestershire is better known in England for the Leicestershire Experiment than for the excellence of its Primary schools. The Experiment, which has been successful enough now to be called the Leicestershire Plan, consists of the gradual abolition of the eleven-plus selection examination which used to determine whether a child would go to a high status grammar school or a relatively lower status secondary modern school at the end of his Junior School years. The Director of Education, and others recognized that there were serious limitations and inequities in this scheme, both for the children who passed the examination and were selected for the grammar schools and for those who were not so selected. They took seriously the fact that I.Q. is no longer considered by many reputable psychologists an adequate measure of intellectual functioning. They also noted the evidence from their own schools which indicated that the eleven-plus examination did a rather poor job of selecting children who could benefit from a straight "academic" education. There were other factors, too. The examination was unpopular with many of the parents of the 75% of children who did not qualify for places in the grammar schools. In the eyes of many segments of society, and too often in their own eyes as well, these children were labeled failures at the age of eleven and a half. There was also general recognition among the people I talked with of the grave shortcomings of traditional grammar school educatqon, though I do not know how widespread such a point of view is. Finally, parental dissatisfaction worked the other way too. Many parents of children in the grammar schools wanted art, music, and crafts available for their children.

The Director and his colleagues decided, for all those reasons that the time had come to abolish the eleven-plus examination. It was to be replaced by a two-tier secondary program in which all children at eleven and a half would go into comprehensive "high-schools" and in which those children whose parents agreed to undertake to keep them in school for at least two more years (that is, for one year beyond the legal school-leaving age of fifteen) would go into a grammar school, the same in name as its ancestor but quite different in form and function. The use of the labels "high school" and "grammar school" is therefore different in Leicestershire than it is in the rest of the country. The Leicestershire Plan is still being implemented: it entails a lot of new building, the creation of quite different kinds of facilities, in many instances, than those which had previously existed. One of the main advantages of the Plan, in addition to its short-circuiting of the eleven-plus, is that it provides a change in schools for children at the age of fourteen, when many are ready for a new environment. It also avoids the creation of excessively large comprehensive schools by breaking the secondary program into two parts.

It is fortunate, but not really surprising, that the evils of the eleven-plus examination were so apparent. (Other local Education Authorities in England are now considering abolishing the examination, and some of them are interested in the comprehensive, two-tier secondary system pioneered in Leicestershire.) One father in the County refused to speak to his daughter for three months after she had "failed" the examination. A child in another part of England ran away from home and was found dead on the moors after failing to be selected for grammar school. It is no wonder that only a few of the better Primary schools, where the head was a man of strong character and liberal outlook, could resist all pressures and concentrate their energies on education, instead of on preparation for the examination. While teachers in Leicestershire do not all seem to have the respect for variation in children's abilities and in their rate and style of intellectual growth that some of their colleagues do, many recognize that the pattern pioneered by the Infant Schools is successful and worth extending into the Junior Schools. The abolition of the eleven-plus examination is facilitating this extension and is allowing teachers to do what they consider best for the children without worrying about external evaluation by standardized tests. The new freedom to extend the best features of established practice and to try new ideas without being concerned for overly narrow criteria of evaluation has led to a creative flowering in primary education.

IV

Why has elementary education in the United States been evolving so differently than it has in Leicestershire? Several factors stand out clearly. First, the impact of Infant School education on teaching at higher age levels in Leicestershire has had no real counterpart in this country. Second, there is a lack of deep dissatisfaction in this country about regressive educational practices which could be identified and modified. Few educators in the United States have yet realized that our nationwide standardized achievement testing program, for example, is exerting the same destructive influence on elementary schools that the eleven-plus examination has had on English Primary schools. We have been too proud of our skill in devising reliable tests to worry much about their validity in terms of any meaningful criteria.

A third factor may have to do with ambition. The pioneers of progressive education were reacting against practices which could readily be improved upon. They did not need to worry, in those days, about whether their students would be "prepared" for acceptance by the next school in line. Entry into private secondary schools and colleges was largely a matter of ability to pay. Competition for available places and a greatly eleaborated testing program have changed this situation radically, and the change has ramifications right down to the kindergarten level. Few school heads have had the perspective and strength to resist the current pressures. The chief function of our independent schools, and many of our public school systems as well, has become that of preparing the child so that he will be accepted at the college of his coice, such acceptance being largely contingent upon grades achieved in school and upon the results

of competitive nationwide examinations. The progressive education movement in the United States was limited to relatively few schools, most of them attracting middle-class children. Unfortunately, these schools have proved pecularily susceptible to pressures for achievement.

I do not know how much correspondence there was between the doctrines preached at Columbia's Teachers' College and similar institutions and what was happening in the schools during Columbia's heyday as a fountainhead of progressive theory. I suspect that practice was quite different from theory. Many ideas in education seem difficult or impossible to convey by words alone. As a result, one cannot expect too much for teacher-training situations in which there is not close contact and cooperation between educationists at the university level and persons concerned with the day-by-day conduct of classes in schools. I have recently learned of a professor of education, a man noted for his liberal outlook and his capacity for attracting disciples, who decided to check on what was happening in the schools where some of his more promising students had been teaching. He was appalled! Some of us who have followed the progress of teachers trained in new ways of teaching mathematics have had a similar experience. There are often great gaps between what one says and what others do.

I have observed some of the changes which take place in a school where parents and teachers have become increasingly concerned about standards. It is very easy, in the absence of a compelling counter-example, to be caught up in a concern for a limited kind of academic excellence, a concern which manifests itself in the setting of carefully prescribed "production" schedules. A few people recognize that these schedules reflect standards maningless in any sense relevant to the child as he really is, and are aware of how destructive they can be for children. Most educators, however, take them seriously and are ready to evaluate their own effectiveness as teachers, and that of their colleagues, on the basis of "objective" tests administered to the children after the completion in school of masses of detailed busy work. I have been told that over half of the independent schools in this country, and quite a few public schools as well, now include the results of standardized tests in reports to parents, along with the grades received by the children at school. These reports generally include percentiles by which children are compared with others at the same age level on a national basis.

Do standardized tests influence what is being taught and how it is being taught? In my experience they certainly do, although many teachers would deny that they are training children especially for the tests. There is little recognition among teachers that these tests are often misleading and inadequate indices of a child's ability and accomplishment. Our educational practices have been directed toward questionable standards which are quickly accepted mainly, one suspects, because they can be easily measured.

Recently I heard a group of second-graders from a public school in the Boston suburbs discussing the grades they had received. One

child was boasting of a straight-A average; his classmates were quick to point out aht he had received only a B in music. However monstrous the assignment of grades to seven-year-olds appears, it is but a logical extension of a total educational system which attaches high value to narrow measures of production.

Ambition and anxiety, however, are not sufficient to account for the death of progressive education in America. If our progressive schools had been able to maintain a viable model, it would no doubt be exerting some influence even now. I suspect that progressive education as it was practiced in even the test of schools left much to be desired. The conclusion that children would not really accomplish much unless work was prescribed in detail for them, seems to have been reached by many otherwise enlightened teachers. This is why the Leicestershire developments are so important for us now; here is a mature form of progressived education which is working successfully on quite a large scale. One of the main pitfalls that the Leicestershire schools seem to have avoided is that of excessive planning and control of the detailed steps in the educational process. Visitors to Leicestershire can see children in many different schools handling their own affairs and productively pursuing their own interests with guidance but not constant manipulation by the teacher.

The factors which have allowed one county in England to make educational progress, while so little has been done here, are well worth probing. I do not find particularly helpful the comment of one English educator, "Well, we have learned from your mistakes." What were our mistakes and how can we guard against making them again?

The most common criticism of progressive education in America was that it was chaotic, that the children were undisciplined and disorganized. I apprenticed to a progressive teacher for part of my training period, and I must say that the behavior problems were formidable. Exciting things happened in the class, but it took a tremendous exertion on the teacher's part to direct and redirect the children's energy. There was more disorder and sometimes chaos, than I or many other teachers could tolerate for long periods of time.

In Leicestershire we found class after class in which the children had considerable freedom and in which there was seldom, if ever, any need for the teacher to step in to control behavior. Such an atmosphere presents quite a cheek to the American visitor who is accustomed either to the volatility of children who have been given apparent free rein or to the seeming docility of those whose every action has been rigidly controlled. The children we saw were purposefully involved in what they were doing and were capable of sustaining their interest and energy over long periods of time with little or no reference over long periods of time with little or no reference to the teacher. We visited, one Friday afternoon at three o'clock, a class which had been without a teacher for the day. There was a normal hum of activity which continued during our visit and some good work was still being

done. Freedom and choice do not need to go together, at least not for these Leicestershire children who have learned how to handle real freedom. One might even hazard the guess what the disorganization so often observed in schools which are trying to be progressive can prevent children from being really free by forcing their attention continually onto the process of testing behavioral limits.

Is it "national character," patterns of child rearing, or some set of hidden sanctions that enables these children to work industriously and creatively without having tasks prescribed in narrow form or behavior rigidly controlled? Whatever factors may be operating such classes do not spring up spontaneously without there having been someone with a pretty good idea of what he was about. I was able to visit a school which had just recently come under county supervision. Here there was a repressive discipline in operation and at least in one class it was not completely effective. In his highly controlled room the lid was about to blow off and was being held on by strenuous exertions on the part of the teacher. The great variation among the County schools may provide valuable clues about the extent of the transformation which has taken place in Leicestershire and the means by which it has been achieved.

Most of the activities we saw in the best Junior Schools were loosely structured. Children were given much latitude, not only in what they did but in how they did it. Some of the most structured work was in mathematics, parts of the Dienes' multi-base arithmetic and algebra senics were assigned to the entire class, but each child was to work on it at his own pace, and the assumption was made that while the teacher would keep an eye on the student's overall progress and perhaps even check his work at intervals, the child would work along essentially without adult supervision, using the cards and materials provided. This is an example of structured material being used in a free way. The contract between these Leicestershire schools and American classrooms can be judged by the fact that American children who have used the same material have had difficulty because the sequences were too unstructured, too open-ended. The Dienes' mathematics laboratory cards ask children to see correspondences between situations which look different but have the same mathematical structure and to deal more with the ideas underlying the tasks than with solutions to particular problems. Our children between the ages of seven and ten have had difficulty in adjusting to this orientation. They have been thrown when asked to make problems of their own and to write down the things they noticed without having specific blanks to fill in. Only after they have been weaned away from a passive, dependent attitude have they been able to handle this work effectively.

It is likely that differences between our schools and those in Leicestershire have been accentuated by the use which has been made here of prepared materials, Reading series with detailed instructions to the teacher on what to do each day, supplemented by disposable reading workbooks, spelling workbooks, language workbooks, busywork

workbooks, are readily available to relieve the American teacher's anxieties about planning curriculum and ensuring that the children will always have something to do. (Such series are available in England, too, but are less widely used: perhaps a low per capita budget for supplies has its advantages!) While some schools have rejected mass-produced curricula of this sort as intellectually unrespectable, many teachers in our schools have filled the vacuum thus created by producing hundreds of detailed assignment sheets which they run off on the duplicator. The point has been reached in some schools when a breakdown in the duplicating machinery or a shortage of paper can cause real panic, for many teachers do not know how to teach without the aid of the ditto machine. Somehow, the Leicestershire schools have escaped the spirit duplicator craze. They invest what money they have in tape recorders or desk calculators instead.

Whatever the circumstances which have allowed the Leicestershire schools to avoid drowning in the deluge of materials from school publishing houses, the result is that they are now implementing the philosophy that the process of thinking is as important as, or more important than, the specific content which might fill the blanks. Now, workbooks are not necessarily bad. It is often possible to cover certain kinds of material more thoroughly by their judicious use than by leaving things to chance or to an over-worked teacher. When children have become accustomed to the pattern of following detailed instruction sheets, however, their capacity for self-direction and involvement in the subject for its own sake, rather than for the sake of completing N number of exercises, is usually diminished. It is tempting to say that a careful mixture of detailed assignments and less structured work would produce the best results. In Leicestershire classes in which there was deep involvement in excellent work there were few combination assignments of this kind. "You can't go half way," we were told by a teacher who had moved far toward establishing a classroom in which self-direction was the basis of organization. "Either the children are going to learn to be responsible for their own learning, to plan what they are going to do and carry through with it, or they are not." We were further cautioned that the kinds of things we were seeing did not come about all at once. Bill Hazel, headmaster of the Ravenhurst Road Junior School, warned that sometimes one had to wait months in the face of discouraging results before the real fruits of self-direction could be harvested.

The Leicestershire schools have moved away from traditional patterns of class instruction. There is a great deal of interaction among children who may be working together in pairs or in small groups. There are few large group, teacher-directed discussions in which, almost by the nature of things, the game becomes one of trying to guess what the teacher is thinking. If one is genuinely concerned with the intellectual development of children, rather than with preparing them to "look good" on tests, it is necessary to acknowledge that formal class teaching, even by skillful teachers, must have a limited role in the primary school. Learning proceeds much more effectively when the child is actively involved in what he is doing, as the Infant Schools have so clearly demonstrated. Such involvement does not come about when there is an emphasis on Capital T Teaching any more than it does when

children are encouraged to race through quantities of worksheets.

The Dienes' Laboratory sequences are designed to remove the teacher from a position of central authority so that he can observe the children learning in ways which may be quite unfamiliar to him. They are also designed to be as open-ended as possible, as frequently asking the children to make up problems as to solve them. In some schools in the County this work in mathematics has been used successfully as an opening wedge in encouraging more flexible forms of classroom organization. For example, children typically work in pairs on the Dienes' material and when desks have been rearranged to make this possible, other uses for the resulting "decentralized" seating plan have been found. I suspect that flexible patterns for learning are attained through a series of steps: the first step may be a small one, leading to a classroom still far removed from that which will appear when more experience has been gained, when the teacher develops confidence in the value of the freedom he is gradually extending. It is quite an innovation, for some schools, to remove the teacher from a position of central authority and control, if only for mathematics, because new and usually demanding teaching skills and roles must be learned. It may be that at first a sharp break from tradition is necessary, if only in a limited sphere. On the other hand, experienced teachers do not hesitate to set up teaching situations, upon occasion in which children are grouped together because they are at a similar point in their explorations, and the teacher may work intensively with such groups.

Within many Leicestershire schools there is now an openness to honest experimentation which is in sharp contrast to the rigidities one so often finds in our own schools. This has probably come about as a result of a series of experiences with successful innovations. There is unusual receptivity to new ideas. Teachers and heads are not hesitant to take chances with ideas which may have merit, nor are they reluctant to criticize freely when things do not work out as expected. I was surprised, although I have known of the Leicestershire developments for some time, to learn of the extent of some of the explorations which are in progress, explorations which always start on a small scale and expand if they are successful. In mathematics, in addition to work introduced by Dienes' and Sealey, investigations are underway on the use of Cuisenaire rods, Encyclopedia Britannica workshop books, Madison Project mathematics, the use of desk calculators as an adjunct to learning mathematics, and an interesting secondary mathematics program being developed by Dr. Richard Skemp. In the field of reading the County is participating in a nationwide study of the Pitman Initial Teaching Alphabet (the so-called Augmented Roman alphabet) and there is interest in Gattegno's "Words in Color." Mathematics, reading, handwriting, teaching machines, history, science, physical education, art, music, camping, and the study of the special problems of working class children--this list gives some idea of the range of explorations being undertaken in the County. All of the research is done in the field--in the classrooms, by people whose backgrounds enable them to implement and adapt ideas suggested by others and to work out projects of their

own. (The above list is not exhaustive: one finds projects being undertaken with little or no advertising!) The well established lines of communication among the primary schools and the advisors enable the whole county to benefit from the experience of individuals with new ideas. Teachers not only hear about what is being done, they can go to see it in other teachers' classrooms, for visiting is commonplace for teachers as well as for heads.

Here, in effect, is a large-scale laboratory in which many promising ideas are being tested within a sound educational framework. Judging from what I have seen and from the ideas that people in Leicestershire are currently discussing there will be frew paths in education which are not explored. A surprising thing to Americans whose immediate association to the word "research" may be "foundation grant", is that there is little or no special financial backing for such investigations--mainly, again, because the money just isn't available. It may prove in the long rund that it is actually desirable to start in a small way, without funds from afar, rather than on the m assive scale which big money makes possible. In Leicestershire much of what is done is accomplished on the teacher's own time, although courses and study groups are often held during school hours. Holidays may be used for residential courses, attendance at which is voluntary and does not provide "credit" for the teacher. In short, there is a continuing program of in-service training for teachers old and new as new ideas require a changing outlook.

It is inevitable, I think, that serious students of education will come to recognize that research must take place outside the laboratory, in school conditions not too different from those which can be established in the schools they hope to influence. The primary schools in Leicestershire appear well on their way toward becoming a model educational laboratory for the future.

There are two developments in Leicestershire which appear to us to be particularly promising at the moment. One is the emergence of vertical, or "family" grouping in the Infant Schools, which I have mentioned above. In schools where vertical grouping is now in effect children are likely to remain with one teacher for their entire stay in the school, at lfirst learning much from older children in the class who have been there for up to two and a half or three years and are therefore in a position to communicate the very real culture of the school society, helping newcomers assimilate this culture, as well as being able to give assistance with specific skills. There is a living heritage in these schools to which both children and staff are contributors and of which both are recipients. So real is the sub-culture which develops that it is not surprising to find that children are carrying it with them into the outside world of family and peers. In some working class communities with little traidition of reading in the home, for example, the children themselves are bringing from school an interest in books, an attitude toward readingand probably toward schoolwork in general, which means that younger brothers and sisters enter the Infant School now with markedly different attitudes and expectations than were held by those entering a few years ago. Such an

effect cannot be ascribed solely to family grouping, and I do not know how extensive it is, but it suggests that these Infant schools are well worth close study by those in our country who are particularly concerned with "disadvantaged" children.

A second development which may be important here also had its roots in the Infant Schools. A number of classes had developed to the point where the children were so involved in their work that the distinction no longer needed to be made between one subject and another, or between work and play. There did not need to be a special time for reading or writing or mathematics, because the educational framework and the materials available were such that children came naturally to want to read and write and work on mathematics, to learn the necessary skills in these areas just as they learned how to manage paint and clay and a tower of blocks. It was not necessary to schedule a time for the morning milk break, because the children were capable of serving themselves when they were ready without disturbing those who were continuing to work. Some schools have milkbars now, where children can sit down and chat with their friends over their daily third-of-a-pint. Freeing the schedule from artificial, imposed interruptions made it possible for children to continue to work for sustained periods of time. As this method of school organization, known in the County by the cumbersome name "integrated day," was found successful in the Infant Schools it was extended to some Junior classes, on the theory that children used to working freely as Infants could make even better use of freedom as Juniors. The relaxed but purposeful atmosphere which we found in some Infant and Junior Schools certainly resulted, in part, from this throwing away of fixed schedules, from allowing children to work at their own pace on tasks of their own choosing. The teacher, in such a situation, must be aware of the kinds of things each child is doing over a period of time, but there is no longer the expectation that every child will do everything every day. The matter of pace is interesting. On occasion we saw children moving slowly, even dawdling at, say, changing their clothes for P.E. There was no hurry at all here, but neither was there any sense of pressure among the children who were painting or writing books or doing mathematics. There was little tension or nervous excitement among the children.

The extension of the integrated day to the Junior Schools was a logical step, revolutionary as it seemed to some, and already it has proved attractive to a number of schools. The Junior classrooms he visited which were newly organized along these lines seemed to be having an easy and profitable time of it, despite marked differences in temperament and ability among the teachers running them. The children in these classes were free to choose what they wanted to do and to carry out their work in a responsible way. The atmosphere was one of absorption, and the work done was of an exceptionally high quality. The Junior Schools do not yet have the rich backlog of materials and projects available to the Infant Schools, but the inventiveness of teachers and the open communication system among them is likely to establish before too long, a Junior School tradition similar to that of the Infant Schools.

Many people will recognize that what is being accomplished in the best of the Leicestershire schools constitutes a desirable form of education. The County's achievements are basically honest and are not contrived to meet pressures which are essentially irrelevant to good learning. We in this country, however, have a whole set of expectations and assumptions which will make change difficult. Many teachers will be prepared to acknowledge that the standard of written English is quite a bit higher in Leicestershire or that there the average child's accomplishment in mathematics is superior to that of children from even the most favored backgrounds in this country. They may not be prepared to recognize that the attainment of such standards is the result of giving children the freedom and the stimulation to become genuinely involved in the process of their own education, instead of prescribing for children in fragmented detail what they should be doing at every step of the way and communicating, via tests and grades, a sense of anxiety and pressure about achievement. Teachers may not be able to admit that Leicestershire schools are moving in a direction directly opposite to that being taken by most schools here.

There will be those who will not accept the evidence of their own eyes and ears as they watch a Leicestershire classroom in operation. Children may have a zest for learning and attain obvious high standards in their work and yet the question some people immediately ask will be, @How do their standardized test scores compare?" Occasionally it happens that a child in his last year of a really fine Leicestershire Junior School moves to another country, and must take the eleven-plus. All evidence indicates that with just a little last-minute coaching these children do just as well as children whose entire career in Junior school has been pointed toward the examination. That these children do so well on an examination for which their schooling has not specifically prepared them could prove to be the fact which would lead many people to consider the desirability of implementing a Leicestershire-type program. It does not seem likely, though, that such implementation will prove successful if undertaken under pressure by people who might come to feel that the goal was to boost test scores a few points.

VI

It is easy enough to be dispassionate in considering broad social and cultural influences upon our schools. It is not so easy to be restrained when one is closely familiar with what certain practices mean in the lives of individual children who become the victims of their parents' and their teachers' ambitions. When the exploitation becomes institutionalized, as it has been in so many places, it is hard to realize that there are more honest, more human ways of organizing learning. The effect of having classes in which children must continually accommodate themselves to the teacher's train of thought and to a production schedule which specifies what is to be done in inflexible detail is to set up a series of races in which certain skills and attitudes are strongly rewarded. The strategies of production which successful students develop have little relation to honest intellectual endeavor and are likely to inhibit the growth of intellectual skills and attitudes which are necessary for creative growth in any field. Production

demands greatly restrict the development of diverse styles. The daily races in the classroom reward a limited and not very valuable range of talents. Given such a system one should not be surprised that students with real creative potential are increasingly to be found among the deviants, the misfits. The tragedy is that those who are unwilling or unable to meet such narrow performance demands will have their confidence in their own ability destroyed and will be left with little understanding of their own talents, while those who are successful have their own price to pay. There is an intellectual discrimination in our schools which is every bit as vicious and damaging as racial discrimination.

Our schools have become production oriented, nervously concerned about making things "look good". They cover up their own basic failure to educate in the truest sense, by talking about how education must be rigorous and demanding from an early age. Great concern is voiced over the children who are not sufficiently motivated to withstand the pressures brought to bear on them. There is surprise that many children do not seem to be concerned about meeting the standards set for them--and there is even greater surprise that it is often these children who are most creative. Not all children are ready to accept a hair-shirt orientation toward learning at an early age. Those who do conform and are successful are cheated, just as fully as those who do not conform and learn to mistrust their own abilities.

A strong hope is that the present curriculum reform movement in America, operating through different channels and in different ways may help in the intellectual emancipation of children. Just the fact that school people are not so completely isolated from professional people who have rather different styles and values than those allowed in the classroom is encouraging. Curriculum reform will amount to very little, however, if it is bounded by the assumption that the specialist's job is to set out the content in well organized form so that it may then be taught by determined teachers. I cannot share the optimism of those who feel that present trends will automatically bring about fundamental changes. I do not believe that we are facing up to the basic problem of classroom organization. We may be getting a better curriculum content in mathematics, science and social studies, but unless the basic framework of the elementary classroom is altered in the process not a great deal will have been achieved.

Leicestershire helps us to see just how sick our schools really are. What has been happening in the County gives strong support to the vision of people who have known that there could be more effective and Humane forms of education, and provides a formidable challenge to those who would try to implement their beliefs.